REED CRANDALL

Illustrator of the Comics

HEROIC EXPLOITS

THE HELL OF WAR

HORROR & TERROR

SCIENCE FICTION

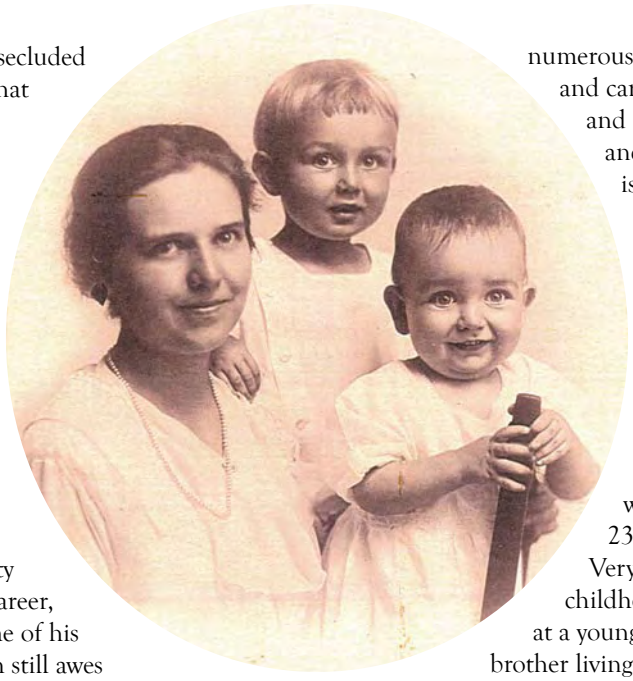
by Roger Hill

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

A Young Boy Develops Artistic Roots

It was on the quiet and secluded farmlands of Indiana that one of America's most talented comic artists found both his first home and inspiration as an artist. Reed Leonard Crandall, Jr., was only 4 years old when his artistic talent took root on the family farm in Jasper, Indiana. It is here, amidst the rhythms of rural living, that a young boy launched his flight into the fantasy world of comic art — a journey that lasted for nearly 50 years — and came to an end in a Wichita, Kansas, retirement facility in 1982. But, during his prolific career, comic art enthusiasts enjoyed some of his best "illustrative comic art," which still awes and inspires comic art devotees today.



Born on February 22, 1917, in a log cabin in Dubois County, near Jasper, Indiana, Reed Leonard Crandall, Jr. was the second child of Delia and Rayburn Crandall. The young couple lived on a farm belonging to the honorable John F. Dillon, a part-time farmer and local judge who sat on the bench in nearby Bloomington. Judge Dillon, whose ancestors had helped settle the little town of Jasper in 1830, owned a sizable acreage of land in Jasper, the seat of government for Dubois County situated in the heart of southern Indiana on the Patoka River. Located 122 miles southwest of Indianapolis, the town is rich in heritage and noted for its heavily German Catholic ancestral roots. During the period that Reed lived there, the people of Jasper made their living by farming as did so many people residing in America's heartland in the early 20th century. The city was also the home of numerous woodworking industries, wagon, and carriage shops, machine shops, glove and canning factories, a creamery, and a grain elevator. Today, Jasper is a community of a little over fifteen thousand people and often referred to as the "Wood Capital of the World," boasting a very large number of furniture companies.

The connection to Judge Dillon came through Crandall's mother, Delia Louise Highwood, who was born on December 23, 1891, in Princeton, Indiana. Very little is known about her early childhood other than she was orphaned at a young age and separated from a brother living in Newton, Kansas. Judge Dillon eventually adopted the young Delia, who came to live with him in Jasper, learning the tempo of farm living by helping the hired hands with the endless chores. During the summer of 1913, the 22-year-old Delia's simple life took a turn when she made a trip to Newton to visit her brother. There she met Rayburn Leonard Crandall, a handsome young man, who at 23 years of age became quite fond of Delia. When the young couple met, Rayburn was working as a plumber for the Mort Linthicum Plumbing Shop, in Newton, and was a man of many interests, beyond the pipes and fittings of the plumbing trade. This young man, who had been born in Newton on August 19, 1890, the eldest son of Reed and Eila (Herrick) Crandall

Above inset: Delia Louise Crandall and her two sons. **Lower right:** The Crandall brothers on the farm with their collie, King.

CHAPTER THREE

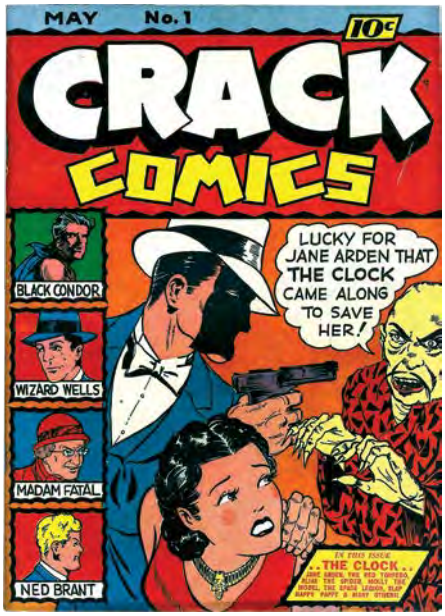
New York City Beckons

Reed stayed at NEA through the fall of 1940, and then decided to head for New York City. Both he and Frank Borth knew that New York was the publishing capital of the world and, if one expected to break into the field of professional magazine illustration, this city held the key to a successful career. According to Borth, when Reed left for New York, he became the scout (so to speak) for himself as well as for Borth, to find work in the illustration field. Before leaving Cleveland, the two artists made an agreement: if Reed ran out of money in the Big Apple, he could count on Frank to send him some more until he was able to find work.

Above: After settling into his first New York apartment, on 37th Street, in late 1940, 23-year-old Reed Crandall sent home this photo to his Newton relatives. Here he's working on the first page of what is believed to be his first comic job, a five-page "Samar" story, published in *Feature Comics* #43, April 1941. Photographer unknown.

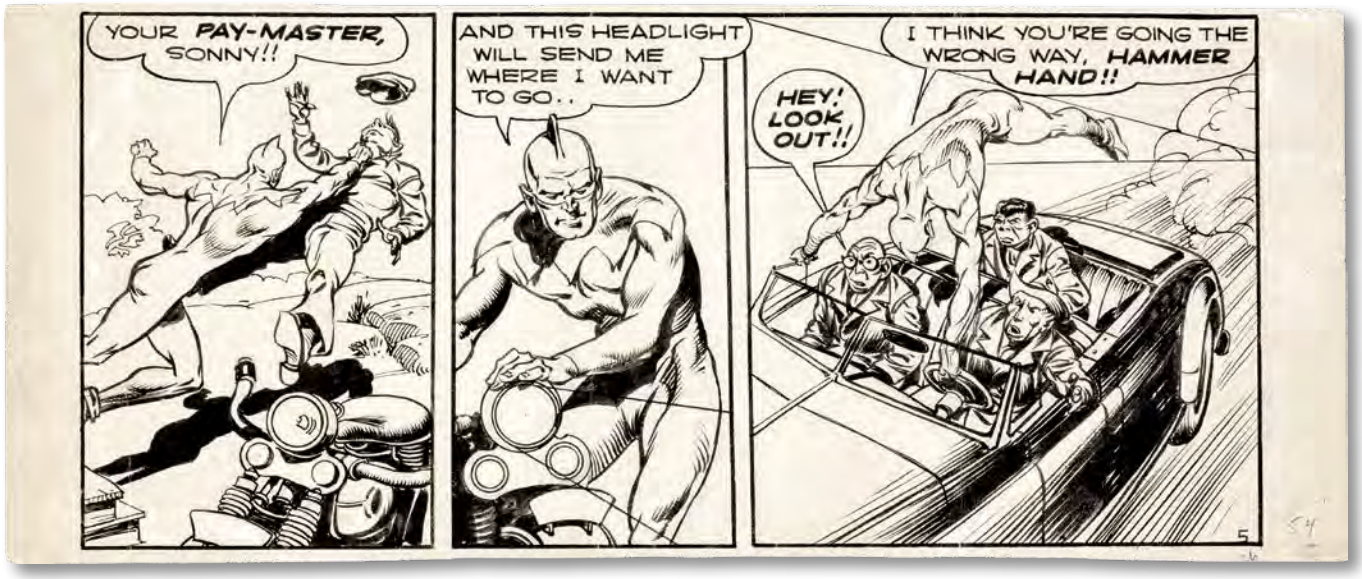
The boys had heard about the success of Jerome Siegel and Joe Shuster, two Cleveland teenagers who, since 1935, had been promoting and trying to sell their "Superman" character idea as a newspaper comic strip. In early 1938, they finally made the sale to New York's DC Comics, which put "The Man of Tomorrow" into the first issue of *Action Comics*. Within months, this new blue-and-red garbed super-hero had become the greatest hit in American comic books. By the time Reed was ready to leave Cleveland, super-heroes had become the hottest properties in comics, and he was certainly aware of the money then being made in this ever-growing new field of art. Preparing for the venture, Reed packed his portfolio with several examples of work that he had created at the school, one in particular to show he had a good command of male anatomy and composition. This watercolor, depicting several acrobats performing gymnastics, could have appealed both to magazine or comic book editors. Reed's plan was to become an illustrator of magazines and books, but if he had to draw comics for a period of time to get by, so be it; he knew the money was substantial, one way or the other. More than 55 years later, this gymnastics watercolor original surfaced in an internet auction. The seller had found it in a flat file in a New York City poster and art frame shop, recognized the name, and purchased it. That piece is reproduced in this book.

Upon arriving in the Big Apple by train, Reed began visiting various magazine publishers. As he soon discovered the illustration market was an overcrowded community, with a plethora of good artists already established to do the work. Even as early as 1940, the field of illustrative art was an endangered market and history has shown that it never recovered. With color photography gradually becoming more popular with both consumers and magazine editors, the demand for magazine illustration was on the decline. However, as is the case in many success stories, Lady Luck



throwing them in the trash after they were printed. He kept a large barrel in his offices specifically for that purpose. The reason behind this eccentricity was to prevent artwork from falling into the hands of anyone who might try to re-use it. He discontinued this practice in later years, and as luck would have it, a few pages of original art produced by Reed and other artists during the early 1940s did manage to escape his "busy" hands, so to speak. This early rescue of some of this ill-fated comic art was due to a few artists who were able to liberate the pages before Arnold got his hands on them. In other instances, to maintain a smooth transition from artist to artist, Arnold would give the art to an incoming artist who was taking over a feature from another as a means to help familiarize them with the style of what had been previously published. In those days, no one could have predicted or known that years later original comic art would gain substantial value and become a hobby for thousands of collectors around the world. During the 1940s, comic art was generally discarded or put into warehouse storage where it was sometimes damaged by the elements or eventually thrown out during irregular warehouse cleanings. Other originals were given away to friends or visitors who came through the offices, saw something they liked, and asked for it. For these and other reasons, some of Reed Crandall's early originals have survived and are highly valued by today's collectors.

When Reed walked into the Iger shop with his samples, Jerry Iger was impressed and gave him a job right away. The shop protocol was generally to put an artist on a weekly salary,



Reed. More than likely Reed heard about this job through other Iger shop artists who freelanced and may have already worked for Simon and Kirby. One other possible theory is that Reed acquired the job through another comic packaging outfit called Funnies Incorporated — also referred to as the Jacquet Shop — which provided art for other Timely titles besides *Captain America*. This establishment was managed by Lloyd Jacquet (pronounced *shock-kay*), a man who had been involved in the comic's game since 1934, when he worked as an editor for Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson on *New Fun Comics*. By 1938, Jacquet was toiling for the Centaur line of comics under Joseph Hardie and, in 1939, Jacquet and several partners opened an "art shop" service of their own, operating out of a small office at 49 West 45th Street. Like the Iger shop, Jacquet also produced stories and art for various publishers, including Fawcett Publications, Gilberton, Hillman, Lev Gleason, Novelty, and the publications of Timely/Marvel/Goodman. Due to space limitations, most of Jacquet's artists worked off-site.

History has recorded that this second issue of *Captain America Comics* was turned out on a short deadline schedule, which explains why other artists were brought in to help complete the assignment on time. This combined effort by different artists creates a style that is somewhat distorted beyond the typical look of a Simon and Kirby story produced during the 1940s. For many years now, the debate between comic book fans and collectors has grown when discussing Reed's and other artists' involvement on #2. For a long time there has been the misconception that Reed only inked certain panels or pages of this comic, but additional facts have surfaced over the years that disprove this belief. First and foremost was a visit that Wichita collector Robert Barrett had with Reed during the 1960s, when this very subject came up in conversation. Barrett's account of speaking directly with the artist verifies that Reed told him he had done some penciling for Simon and Kirby on this book. He didn't mention doing any inking on this job, but traces of Reed's inking style can be clearly seen on certain panels as well. To back up this first-hand knowledge about Reed penciling part of this story, all one has to do is study the comic art of Reed Crandall from 1941 to the end of his life and one comes to recognize the figures, faces, forms, backgrounds, and other characteristics that

Above: *Captain America Comics* #2, April 1941 featured some of Reed's earliest work, assisting Joe Simon and Jack Kirby and others to help meet a pressing deadline. **Next page:** House ad for that issue.

CHAPTER FOUR

Surviving in the Iger Shop

When Frank Borth followed Reed to New York in January, 1941, to pursue his own career, he found Reed living in a small apartment located on the south side of West 37th Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. "That was in the heart of the Hatbox District, just on the fringe of the clothing industry," Borth said in an interview with this author. "It was similar to a brownstone, but rather, red brick. It was done with the same type of architecture where you walk half a flight up to the first floor and a half a flight down to the basement. Reed called it his 'Fifth Avenue walk-up.' You had to share the bathroom down the hall, and dinner was served in the basement area, where everybody else joined in. It was sort of like a boarding house environment. Every room had a fireplace in it. It's an amazing thing, when I think back on it now. Here's Reed, his first time in the big city of New York, walking down 37th Street, and he sees a sign that says 'ROOM FOR RENT.' So he rents this place and, when I arrived there, in early 1941, he put me up for awhile. There was a factory outside the windows and the women working across the way in the factory could see right into Reed's apartment, because he had no curtains at the time. But the funny thing is that Reed's window was flanked on each side by these other large buildings and, when I looked out that window, centered right in between the two, was the Empire State Building in all its beauty. It was a magnificent view, and Reed hadn't even noticed it. He was pretty much oblivious to those kinds of things."

Borth continued, "Reed had a drawing board there in the apartment, but he was working in the bullpen at the time. These places like the Iger Shop had what they called the 'bullpen,' where everybody could sit and work together with their drawing tables. Reed could do it. I couldn't stand it. But he could sit down anywhere and start to draw and it wouldn't make any difference. He'd turn the stuff out like a machine. And he didn't have to be concerned with what he was drawing. He had a photographic memory. He wouldn't have to dig out any reference or do any homework. It used to drive me crazy. Superman was the first super-hero, but everything after that were all long-underwear characters. It didn't make any difference to Reed what he drew."

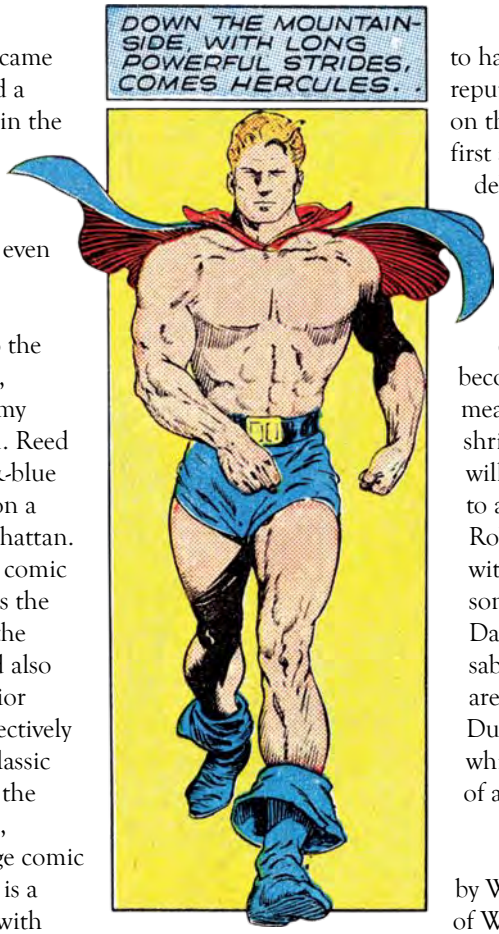
Concluding, Borth said, "In some ways, I think this built-in modesty was his undoing. By that I mean he never really had to get out there and sell himself. All he had to do was show a sample of his work and any fool could see this kid really knew how to draw. And, if they didn't have an opening on their staff, they'd sure as hell make one. And once they discovered how he could turn out the work, not only better, but faster and more consistently, and without any artistic temperament snits — in short, a reliable

Left: Reed, Frank Borth, and Al Fagaly look over a comic script in the early 1940s. **Next page:** *Hit Comics* #18, dated December, 1941 featured one of Reed's best Golden Age action covers and is the *only* cover he signed during the 1940s.

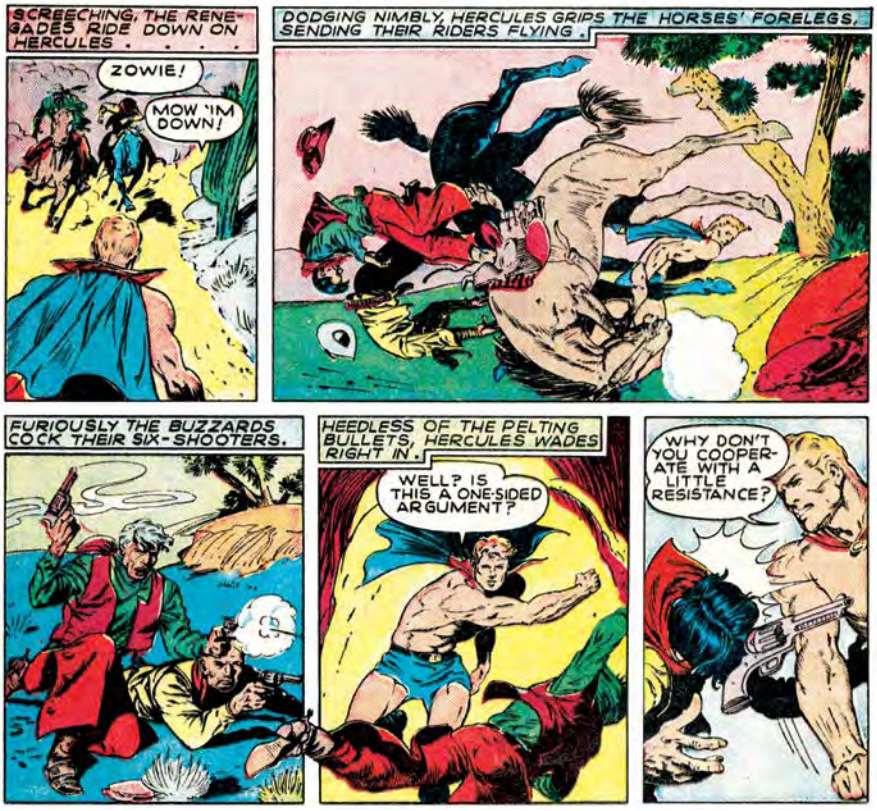
It is interesting to note that, when he became the Great Defender, he suddenly sported a thin mustache. However, while working in the drugstore as Stormy Foster, his upper lip was bare. Presumably this addition of a mustache was sufficient enough to disguise his true identity, as no one, not even his close friends, caught on.

Mac Elkan, an artist who hired into the Iger shop around the same time as Reed, provided the introductory story for Stormy Foster, in *Hit* #18, dated December 1941. Reed drew the cover depicting the red-white-&-blue hero fighting a group of Asians villains on a bridge high over the waters around Manhattan. This is Reed Crandall's third cover for a comic book, and his first for Quality. It also has the distinction of being the only cover that the artist ever signed during the 1940s. Reed also provided Stormy Foster covers and interior artwork for *Hit* #23 and #24, dated respectively August and October of 1942. Another classic cover that he provided for #23, showing the hero slugging it out with Gestapo agents, remains a fan-favorite among Golden Age comic collectors today. Although not signed, it is a spectacular effort on Reed's part, along with the nine-page story inside, and demonstrates the artist at the top of his form. This character proved to be one of Quality's better secondary super-hero features and was carried in *Hit Comics* until issue #34, dated Winter 1944.

Proving himself more than capable of handling these early assignments (and probably at Busy Arnold's insistence), Reed was soon given one of the more important characters to draw. This new assignment would eventually prove to have more of a positive impact on Reed's reputation than any heroes he had worked on thus far. Doll Man had been Quality's first and foremost super-hero, making his debut in *Feature Comics* #27, in December 1939. His origin story tells the tale of young scientist, Darrel Dane, as he develops and creates a potion that will shrink people to the size of a doll. Once he perfects this solution, he becomes a miniature crimefighter himself, measuring only five inches tall, who can shrink and return to normal size by sheer willpower alone. By working as an assistant to an older scientist by the name of Dr. Roberts, who is constantly experimenting with new secret ideas and inventions, some of which are government-sponsored, Dane comes into contact with spies, saboteurs, and other nefarious villains who are determined to undermine America. During the mid-1940s, this miniature whirlwind battled crime with the assistance of a large dog named Elmo.



In the beginning, with stories provided by Will Eisner (under the house name of William Erwin Maxwell), and art by Lou Fine, this "Mighty Mite" proved himself to be one of the more formidable heroes in Quality's lineup of characters. His costume was colorful, yet simple, with a blue, short-sleeved top and shorts, combined with a red cape and red boots. No mask covered his face and yet not even his fiancée, Martha — Dr. Roberts' daughter — nor anyone else, recognized him as the diminutive do-gooder. He finally let Martha in on his secret, in 1943, and even later, toward the end of the title's run, she



Early on at the shop, I started out doing breakdowns for various artists. Iger told me I had a knack for doing them. Some of the artists working there weren't as proficient in breaking down a story, as they were in drawing it. I remember Crandall had some difficulty with laying out a story. He wasn't using enough variety in his layouts; in other words, he was showing a lot of distant shots and not very many close-ups. Iger assigned me to do his layouts for awhile. I'll never forget when Reed came up to me and said something to the effect of, 'Rudy, you don't need to render the figures too heavily. Just put in a slight indication of what you want, and I'll take care of it.' And he was right. He sure didn't need me trying to draw those figures, so why waste time."

Palais spoke very highly of Reed's work in comics for the remainder of his life and took examples of Reed's original comic pages with him upon leaving the Iger shop. In addition to Palais, other artists who worked on the early "Doll Man" stories besides Reed were John Belfi, Al Bryant, John Cassone, Chuck Cuidera, Tony Dipreta, Max Elkan, Lou Fine, Bob Fujitani, Will Eisner, George Tuska, and others.

Bob Fujitani, who signed most of his Golden Age work "Fuje," was hired into the Eisner shop, in 1940, after his friend Tex Blaisdell asked him to bring samples to show to the shop's boss. Blaisdell was already working there and was left in charge whenever Eisner was out of the office. Bob got the job and worked there for Eisner, if only for a few months before moving on to other comic companies, and he ultimately enjoyed a long career working in both comic books and in newspaper comic strip. During that time, he was exposed to some of the finest art being produced in comics, including the work of Reed Crandall, and Fujitani himself worked on the Doll Man character for awhile.

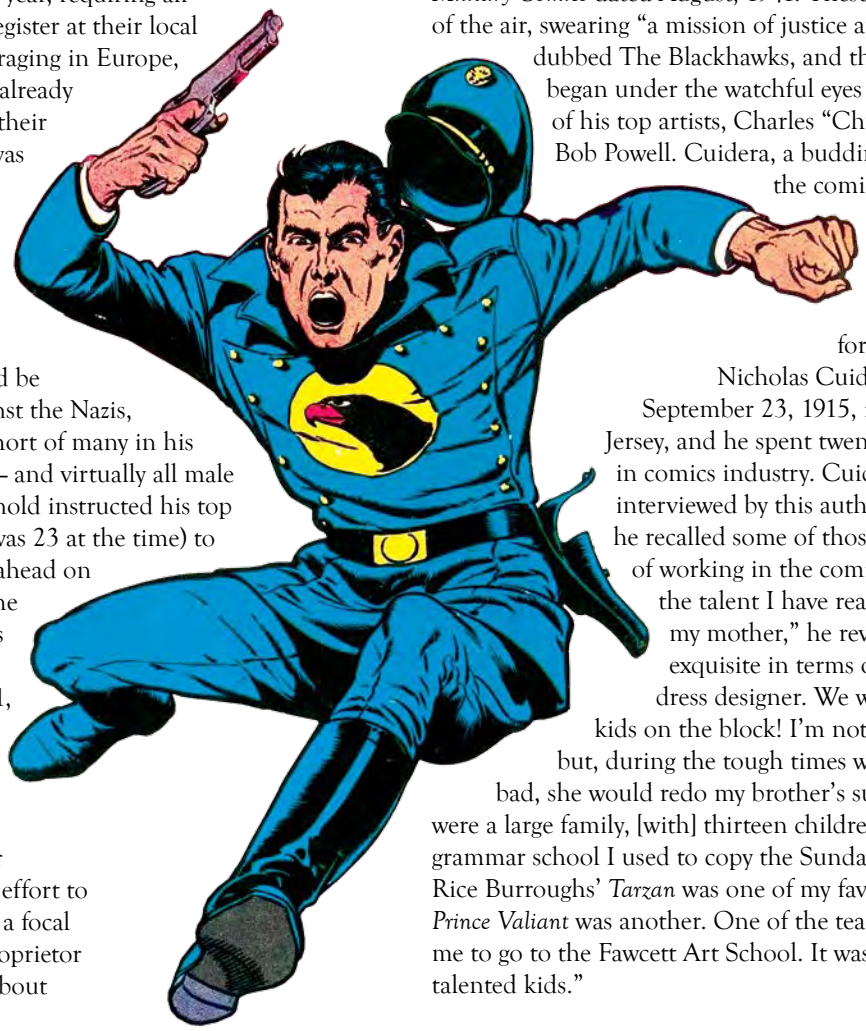
In an interview conducted by this author in 2002, Fujitani remembered the following about Reed Crandall: "Usually an artist's first love is to paint. When I went to the

Above: Often, a skull or hooded skeleton figure added an element of suspense or horror at the beginning of a story. These reproductions of the same splash page from *Smash Comics* #27, October, 1941, show that element, and make a comparison. **Next page:** Splash, *Smash Comics* #27.

CHAPTER SIX

The Arrival of the Blackhawks

In the summer of 1940, Congress passed the Selective Service Act, giving the United States of America the right to induct eligible men into the armed services without waiting for any to volunteer. The draft, as the act came to be informally known, went into effect in October of that year, requiring all males aged 21 to 36 to register at their local draft boards. A war was raging in Europe, and American industry, already supplying the British in their fight against Germany, was anticipating U.S. entry into the spreading conflict and building an arsenal. Busy Arnold knew it was only a matter of time before the country would be pulled into the war against the Nazis, and he would soon be short of many in his staff of young, talented — and virtually all male — writers and artists. Arnold instructed his top man, Will Eisner (who was 23 at the time) to begin getting the artists ahead on their work. In general, the comic book industry was gearing up as well. Even before December 7, 1941, many publishers had started championing the war effort overseas. Some of them started introducing new titles or changing old ones in an effort to make anti-fascist themes a focal point of interest. The proprietor of Quality Comics was about to do the same.



It was in Eisner's Tudor City studio that one of the greatest groups of non-super-powered war heroes was born. This gang of stalwart pilots who, in the beginning wore snazzy black uniforms and flew against the Germans before the U.S. officially entered the war, made their debut in the first issue of *Military Comics* dated August, 1941. These brave commandos of the air, swearing "a mission of justice and death," were dubbed The Blackhawks, and their adventures began under the watchful eyes of Eisner and two of his top artists, Charles "Chuck" Cuidera and Bob Powell. Cuidera, a budding young talent in the comic game, and a man who later became one of Reed's closest friends, drew the first story for *Military*. Charles Nicholas Cuidera was born on September 23, 1915, in Newark, New Jersey, and he spent twenty-five years working in comics industry. Cuidera was first interviewed by this author in 1982 when he recalled some of those early experiences of working in the comic's field. "I think the talent I have really came from my mother," he revealed. "She was exquisite in terms of taste. She was a dress designer. We were the best-dressed kids on the block! I'm not ashamed to say this but, during the tough times when things were bad, she would redo my brother's suits to fit me. We were a large family, [with] thirteen children. When I was in grammar school I used to copy the Sunday funnies. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* was one of my favorites. Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* was another. One of the teachers their urged me to go to the Fawcett Art School. It was an art school for talented kids."

Above: Detail of Blackhawk from the cover of *Military Comics* #20, dated July, 1943. The anti-fascist aviator hero, leader of an entire squadron of flying freedom fighters, was enormously popular in the 1940s. **Next page:** Reed's first Blackhawk cover, *Military Comics* #13, November, 1942, presented a spectacular scene of the seven team members, collectively called the Blackhawks, advancing toward the reader.

Another Blackhawk thriller in the November issue of MILITARY COMICS.

began to warm up, Reed found himself with a full plate, producing some of the finest work of his career, turning out "The Ray," for *Smash Comics*; "Stormy Foster," for *Hit Comics*; and "The Doll Man," for *Feature Comics*. Now he was ready to tackle something different, and in many ways, more complicated than anything he had done thus far.

In 1982, during an interview with this author, Cuidera recalled the transition period when he was leaving for the Army and Crandall was arriving to take over the "Blackhawk" feature in *Military Comics*. He said, "I met Reed through Busy Arnold. He came in one day and I met him for the first time. I had seen his work and I knew what he could do. He

didn't work in Eisner's studio like me; he worked at home at the time. He came in because of that Blackhawk story in *Military Comics* #12, which I didn't complete, just before I left for the service. Reed started on *Military Comics* #12 and I did the cover. I also did most of the story inside. I used to jump around from panel to panel and in no particular order, when I penciled this stuff. Reed was the fastest penciler of any us guys in the shop. He could turn out three pages in the time it took me to do one. Amazing!"

With Cuidera's departure for military duty, Reed took over the Blackhawk episode that Chuck had laid out and partially penciled. Reed added some additional penciling to the splash page and various other

This page: Pages and single panel from Reed's first Blackhawk story in *Military Comics* #12 (on which Chuck Cuidera and Alex Kotzky worked on, as well) that introduced the beautiful spy Xanukhara to comic readers. **Next page:** Original cover art by Reed, *Military Comics* #15, January, 1943.

beautiful, and sensual, could quickly turn into a wide-eyed, open-mouthed, screaming, maniacal woman whenever the script called for it. Blackhawk met some of these abrasive women during his exploits in the comics but, generally, even those types would fall for his rugged good looks and heroic acts of daring by the end of any given story.

Military Comics #14 got even better as Crandall produced a classic splash page showing a giant red devil holding a mysterious "girl of the East" in his hand for the story titled "Tondeleyo." The adventure and characters have similarities to the movie *White Cargo*, which had been released by MGM that same year and starred the beautiful Hedy Lamarr. The ravishing titular brunette is adorned in a sarong and wears a white rose in her hair. Tondeleyo represents the personification of evil and fear among men. In this story, the Blackhawks throw down a challenge for air combat with a squadron of top Nazi aces resulting in numerous panels filled with aerial combat. Reed drew more than 110 airplanes spread throughout this story, including a spectacular choreographed, three-panel full-page sequence, featuring 42 planes, diving, turning, and dog-fighting with one another in the clouds. Tondeleyo is seen throughout the story, sensuous and titillating, while creating fear among the group of aviators. Toward the end, Blackhawk realizes that she represents evil and tells her to get out, just as a Nazi bomber comes crashing down out of the sky and kills her. In the final panel, the narrator tells us "This story has no beginning and no end... it is as timeless as the mind of man."

One of the most memorable Blackhawk stories was titled "Men Who Never Came Back," from *Military* #15, dated January 1943, where three witches appear on the splash page and each page of the 15-page story, introducing themselves as Trouble, Terror, and Mystery. In appearance, Trouble and Terror are classic old witches who spread their wicked cauldron brew throughout the panels using a large spoon. They create trouble and terror for the Blackhawks at every turn. The third witch, Mystery, keeps her face hidden in the shadows during the story and actually helps Blackhawk escape death on three separate occasions as he and his cohorts search for a lost battalion of Scottish Highlanders in India. As the final panels reveal to readers only (Blackhawk himself doesn't find out) the witch called Mystery is a Nipponese girl... "her country's Mata Hari, who betrayed her race," one who has fallen in love with the freedom fighter. She reveals her true identity and feelings in the last panel, as she holds her head in her hands sobbing... "East is East — West is West. Oh Blackhawk...."

Previous page: "The Butcher" was Reed's first Blackhawk story dealing with Baron Von Tepp, Hitler's most brutal henchman. Sixteen pages makes it the longest Blackhawk story ever drawn in the Golden Age and it appeared in *Military Comics* #13, November, 1942. **This page:** Beginning with *Military* #13, writer William Woolfolk joined the team to provide better stories, including this one, for #14, December, 1942, called "Tondeleyo."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Faces, Forms, and Figures

During the 1940s, hundreds of artists toiled in the comics field, each producing their own brand of storytelling and comic panel art. Some of their work appeared detailed and smooth in their approach to drawing and inking, while others followed a more crude or simple path of rendering images. Most artists, whether liked or disliked by the public, had a recognizable style of art with which readers identified and remembered from issue to issue, or company to company (depending on how frequently that artist moved around to other publishers).

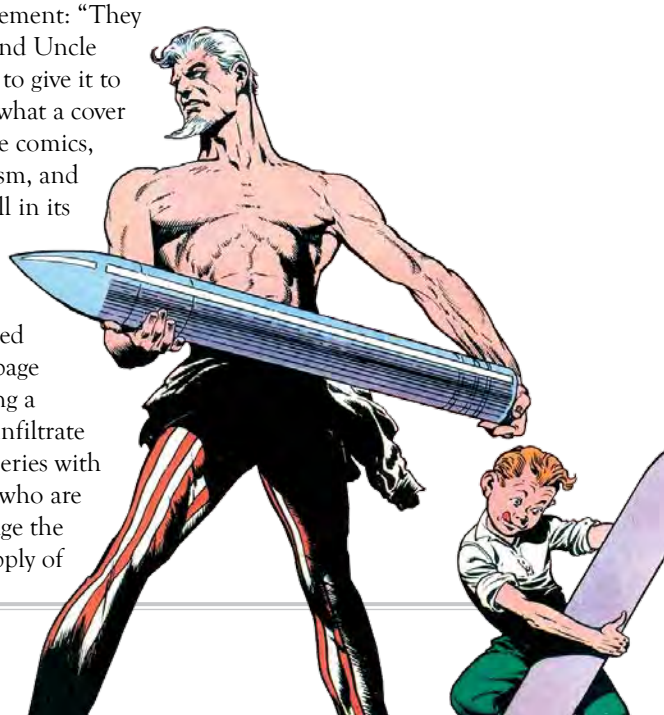
Joe Simon and Jack Kirby became well known for an over-exaggerated, in-your-face form of energetic art that jumped and leaped almost three-dimensionally off the pages of any story or cover they produced. Lou Fine became one of the most respected names in comics for his fine-line detail, fluid renderings of figures, and ability to draw unusual faces. From almost the very beginning, Crandall's work in the industry had characteristics that were unmistakably his own. His posturing, faces, figures, hands, feet, hairstyles, animals, drapery, trees, and shadows all became identifiable and distinctive trademarks of a "Reed Crandall job." There was nothing else quite like it in comics and no mistaking his work when one saw it. Unless another artist had flat-out swiped one of his figures or an image of some kind from one of his stories (which did happen often), one knew it was his work.

Unfortunately, during the 1940s, most people never realized who Reed Crandall was because he almost never signed his art. What they did know — and came to respect — was that this particular artist had an aesthetic quality of realism that many artists could not capture. His figure-work was so precise that it nearly always portrayed a true element of gravity and weight, with reflected shadows from the figures, objects, or backgrounds he was drawing. Faces were usually handsome or pretty, unless the script specifically called for something less. Reed drew comics like filmmakers made movies. The more difficult the angle, the more challenged Reed was to create it. In spite of how fast Reed was able to turn

Above: Will Eisner brought one of the great American icons to four-color comics by introducing Uncle Sam in July, 1940, in the first issue of *National Comics*. Reed's first story from *National* #25, October, 1942, pits Uncle Sam and his boy sidekick, Buddy, up against Nazi saboteurs who plan to blow up the Panama Canal. **Next page:** One of Reed's most famous patriotic covers showed up on *National Comics* #26, November, 1942.

Together (and appropriately), Buddy and Uncle Sam took an idealistic approach to fighting the enemies of America. Reed was the third artist to work on the series following Lou Fine, who had taken over after Eisner's departure as initial delineator. Crandall's first contribution to the character appeared on the cover of *National* #24, dated August 1942, depicting Uncle Sam and Buddy on top of the Statue of Liberty fighting Nazis. The following issue would again showcase Crandall's work on the cover and feature his first interior "Uncle Sam" work. The cover depiction for this issue is one of the more patriotic covers produced for this series, showing full-figure soldiers from every branch of the service, marching behind Uncle Sam and Buddy, headed straight toward the reader. The cover blurb states, "America Marches to Victory behind Uncle Sam." A "Buy War Bonds" advertisement is seen in the upper right corner letting readers know how they, too, could help support this great cause.

As in most entertainment media at the time, patriotism and support for the war was promoted throughout the comic book publishing world from 1940 to 1946, and Quality Comics made sure they were right in the thick of it. Reed's next cover, seen on issue #26 (November 1942) would become even more famous than all the others he created. Today, it is identified by comic historians as a "classic" piece of comic art, and one of the most patriotic covers of World War II. The scene is simple, very poster-like, and depicts Uncle Sam standing erect, looking straight out toward the reader, with jacket and hat off, rolling up his sleeve. His mood is solemn, his face grim and determined. Buddy stands beside the colorful figure, smiling and wearing Uncle Sam's tophat and holding his jacket. There is no background clutter, nothing to distract the eye, just a pure white background, with simple lettering running above the figures and making the announcement: "They asked for it and Uncle Sam is going to give it to them!" And what a cover it is! It is pure comics, pure patriotism, and pure Crandall in its finest form.



Inside the book, Reed drew a nine-page story involving a Nazi plot to infiltrate U.S. oil refineries with spy-chemists who are out to sabotage the country's supply of

CHAPTER NINE

Big Changes on the Horizon

Frank Borth was released from military duty on February 15, 1946. He and his wife, Bobby, who had been living in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, returned to New York and rented a place on the furthest eastern tip of Long Island, in the town of Montauk. When Borth went to see the folks at Quality Comics to get his old job back drawing the "Spider Widow" stories, he was told in so many words "Sorry, but we can't give everybody their old job back. There's just too many G.I.s returning." Within a few days, Borth began developing a daily adventure newspaper strip, which at that time, was a most lucrative market to enter.

Already legendary were the success stories about the incomes of well-known cartoonists, such as Al Capp, Roy Crane, Milton Caniff, and others who had become extremely wealthy from their properties being syndicated in newspapers throughout the U.S. Borth called his new strip *Ken Stuart*, an educational adventure strip about sailing and boating on the high seas. (The lead character was actually named after a real person living in the artist's coastal town). Toward the end of 1946, Borth was notified by his agent that the strip had been bought by the Jay Kay Markey Syndicate. He immediately set to work to get ahead on the project. In those days, most syndicated artists tried to stay ahead of their publishing dates by at least three months. That way, if an artist did encounter a major medical problem or accident of some kind that put him out of commission for a week, or two, or three, it would not create an immediate problem with the strip appearing daily. In order to give the feature the kind of authentic realism he wanted, and to make sure everything was correct, Frank made a trip to the local dock to photograph a friend's boat from stem to stern. The new strip debuted in early 1947 with the hopes that circulation would soon begin to build up and turn into a moneymaker for the Borths.

Meanwhile, at the Quality Publishing Company, the Blackhawk and Doll Man stories and covers were not enough to keep Reed busy full-time. Quality's editor, George Brenner,

decided to let him tackle "Captain Triumph," a popular super-hero feature appearing regularly in *Crack Comics*. This character was unique, in some respects, compared to the other super-heroes owned by Quality. Captain Triumph was actually the joint identity of twin brothers (one alive, the other deceased), a secret that was always shared with the readers at the beginning of each story. This ruse was that when brother Lance (the mortal one) rubbed a strange birthmark on his wrist, his brother Michael (the departed) would then merge with Lance, and they become an invincible warrior known as Captain Triumph. His purpose was to fight against crime and injustice threatened by a throng of different criminals

This page: Photo of one sharply dressed Reed Crandall, taken around 1947. **Next page:** Reed began working on the Captain Triumph feature with *Crack Comics*, starting with #47, March, 1947, and he took over the cover chores from artist Al Bryant with the following issue. This iconic Crandall cover is from Crack #54, May, 1947.

and enemies. Michael, being the disembodied spirit and thus able to eavesdrop on suspicious characters without being seen, would then tip off his sibling to any nefarious plotting of evil shenanigans. Adorned in a simple costume, with red T-shirt, white riding pants, and brown boots, the popular blonde haired Captain — drawn by a number of artists — lasted from 1943 until 1949.

Reed began working on Captain Triumph during the spring of 1947, providing covers and 13- to 15-page stories for each issue. Most of these stories and some of the covers were inked by another one of Quality's star inkers, Robin King. King had been at Quality since 1940, working mostly on the "Blackhawk" and "Captain Triumph" features. Reed's contributions were seen in *Crack Comics* #48 through #61, as well as on many of the covers. Per an agreement with Arnold, Reed was allowed to ink some of these himself. Occasionally, he took on other cover assignments too, such as the one he drew for *The Spirit* #11, dated spring of 1948. This cover depicts the famous crime-fighter shackled to a wall, with a villainous thug getting ready to explode dynamite at his feet. It was another cover that did not need to relate to anything inside the comic; it only needed to convey a sense of suspense and intrigue to the potential reader or buyer. Reed's covers always succeeded in doing that.

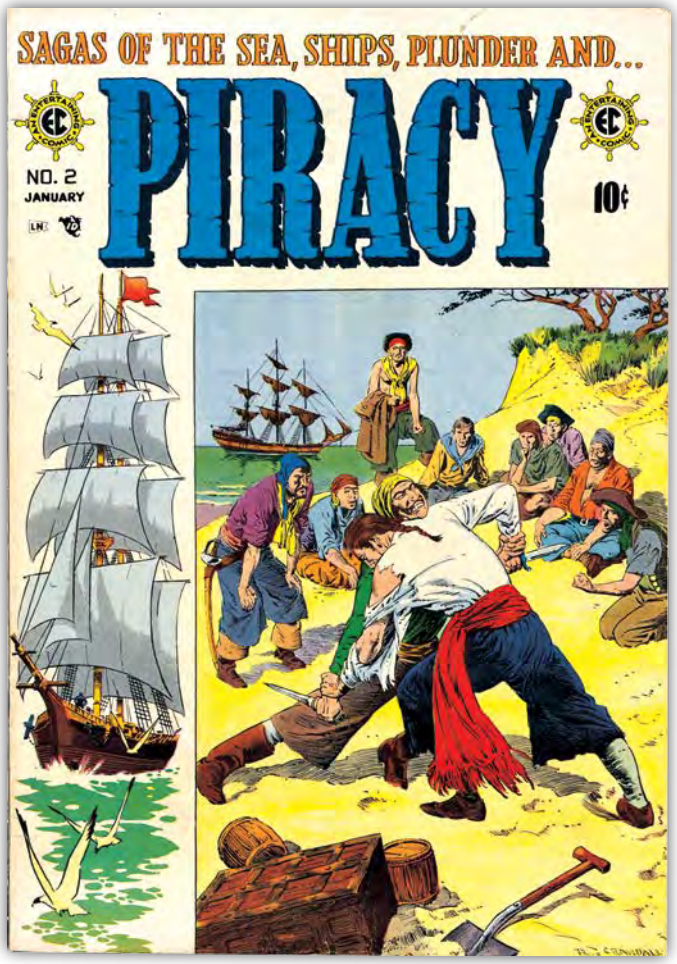
It was during the fall of 1947 that Reed came to visit Frank Borth, in Montauk, where he was working diligently turning out six daily strips of *Ken Stuart* each week and contemplating a Sunday page. The visitor soon confessed to Frank that he was having big problems on the homefront: Reed and Martha were still living together, but married life was not going well. She still adamantly wanted him out of the comic book business and relentlessly badgered him about it. Further, she did not like it when he delivered his finished jobs into

Top: Reed elected not to put any background details on these covers for *Crack Comics* #49 and #52. Perhaps the totally white backgrounds made these issues stand out better on the comic racks. **Above inset:** Cover detail from *Crack Comics* #53, dated March, 1948.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Those Entertaining (and Controversial) Comics

Entertaining Comics, or EC Comics, as it was better known, was owned and operated by William M. Gaines, who had inherited the company when his father died in a 1947 boating accident. At first, Gaines had very little interest in running his father's business, which published a line of children's titles that were losing money. For his mother's sake, the son kept the company going and eventually — after giving up his goal of becoming a chemistry teacher — began making changes to the comic titles to suit his tastes. By the summer of 1953, when Reed Crandall walked through the doors at 225 Lafayette Street and took the elevator up to the seventh floor, the young publisher had some of the industry's top artists working for him and was turning out a line of successful crime, horror, science fiction, and war comics.



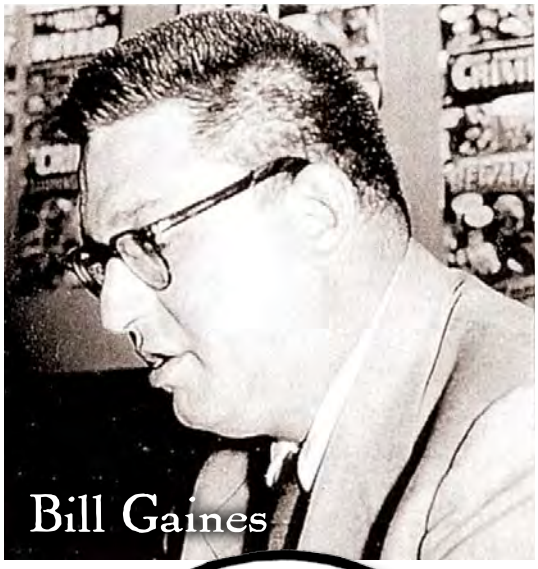
As Gaines recalled years later in an interview published in the comics fanzine *Spa Fon* #5:

> One of the last to stumble in was Crandall and he always said he stumbled in because all of a sudden he became aware that everyone else good was there and why was he not there? He came walking in one day, and of course we had all heard of Reed Crandall and we were just as impressed with him as he was with us, so we fell on each other's necks and he became part of the group immediately. He was a fine, fine craftsman and did some of our very best stuff. I only regret that he came to us so late. We didn't have him for the first half, so we only got half as much out of him as we would have if he had started in 1950.

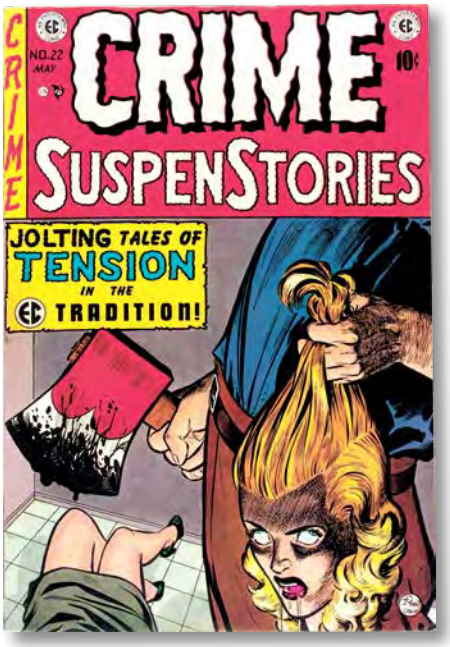
Al Feldstein, who served as Gaines' chief writer and editor between 1948 and 1956 (and who then went on to edit *MAD* magazine for another 30 years), commented in an interview with this author about Reed's involvement with the company. "I knew Reed Crandall and had known him from way back when I was erasing his finished pages at the Iger Art Service Shop," shared Feldstein. "Reed had always been one of my idols... and when he walked into the EC offices one day looking for work, I fell on my knees!

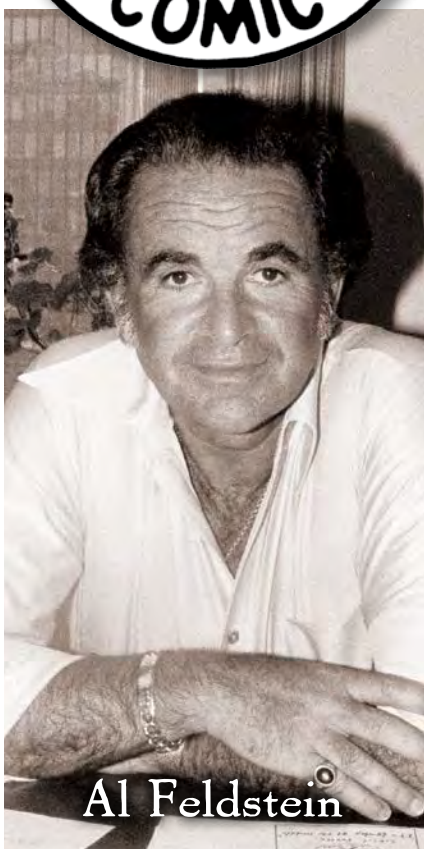
This page: After a brief time freelancing, the artist found himself in the offices of Entertaining Comics, a small company of talented people who were already making an important mark on comics history. Crime, horror, science fiction, war, and even comics about pirates were just a sampling of what lay ahead. Above is the cover of *Piracy* #2, December, 1954–January, 1955. **Next page:** *Terror Illustrated* #1, November–December, 1955.

Because I had always worshiped his impressive style and immense talent, I immediately gave him an assignment, and all I told him was, 'Here, do it.' Reed's professionalism had already been finely tuned. His unique style and creative interpretations had already been years and years in developing. Reed was actually hired because of EC's expansion with the new war titles edited by Harvey Kurtzman, and the resulting need to use available EC artists in them, creating a void that Reed happily filled."


Bill Gaines

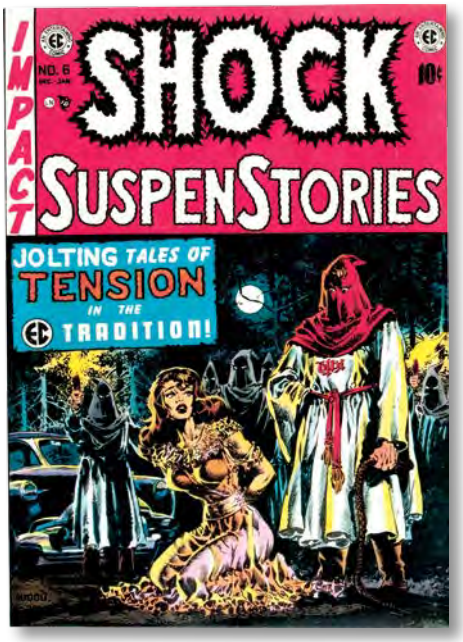
The EC writer/editor continued, "When the artists brought their finished assignments in, I would check them over... make sure they were totally acceptable, turn them over to Bill Gaines, and write the invoices for them, so that they would get their checks right away. While they were waiting for them, I would go over their new assignments. Reed was fully competent and what he did for us was terrific. During the time he worked for us, he always interpreted my scripts creatively and competently and respected his deadlines and always met them. Whenever Reed came in with his art, me and Johnny Craig, who also had space there at EC, would oooh and ahhh over it, which was always well-deserved.




Al Feldstein

I will always remember him being in a good mood and pleasant when he came to the EC offices. He was always presentably dressed in jacket, with a bow tie, which he seemed to prefer."

Reed was a natural to begin working on Gaines' crime and horror comic titles. *Crime SuspenStories* had begun in October of 1950, with *Shock SuspenStories* following in early 1952. Some comic historians claim that both titles were created to cash in on the success of Lev Gleason's popular *Crime Does Not Pay* comics, but the EC titles were always geared toward a different, more mature audience of readers and did not exploit the usual fare of cops and robbers shooting it out on street corners. *Crime SuspenStories* reached deeper into the American psyche and presented a hard-boiled, unsentimental portrayal of crimes dealing with sex and violence, usually with a surprise-twist ending that usually brought justice to the guilty. *Shock SuspenStories* started out with a wide range of content, including one horror, one science fiction, one war, and one shock-type story in each issue. In time, it proved to be one of EC's most memorable titles, presenting groundbreaking stories dealing with racial prejudice, anti-Semitism, gang violence, corrupt public officials, drug



on board, Gaines' horror comics were already near the top of their form and widely considered the best in the field, and thus were being widely imitated by other publishers. Gaines and Feldstein plotted the stories, with Feldstein finalizing dialogue and writing the scripts directly onto large sheets of Strathmore paper provided to the artists. There were no typed scripts at EC. When the artists came in to pick up a job, they reviewed the pages briefly with the writer/editor to make sure everything was clear. One of Feldstein's great attributes was to give his artists complete freedom to draw the features any way they wanted, encouraging experimentation and to follow their own natural instincts as artists and give themselves credit by signing their work.

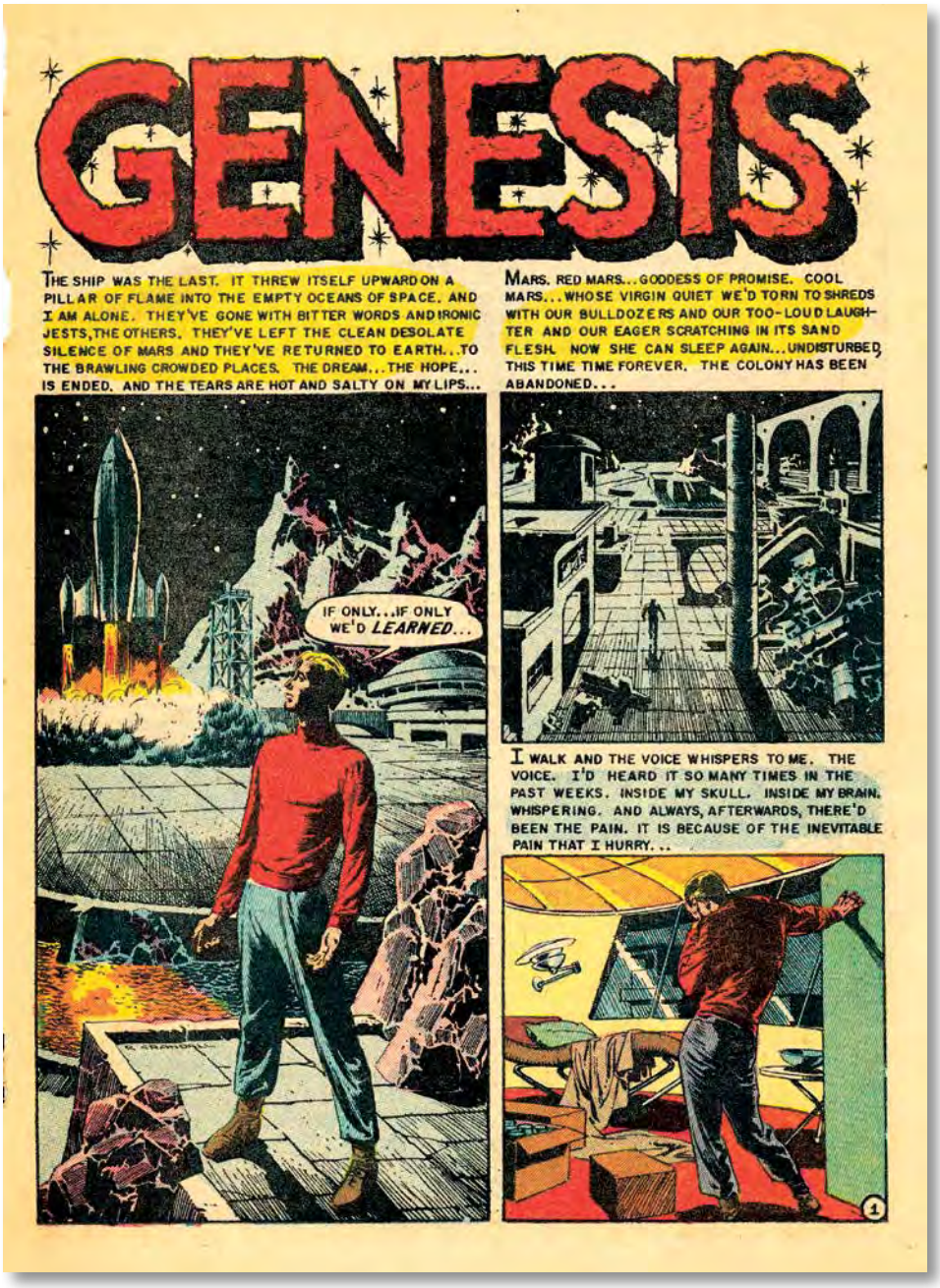
Reed's second EC undertaking was a vampire tale published in *Haunt of Fear* #20, from July-August 1953, which afforded the artist a chance to draw what he was very good at: beautiful women and elderly people. This six-page classic, called "Bloody Sure," features a young Waldo Buckley, who, passing through a sleepy little town one evening, is attracted to a beautiful young widow by the name of Anna Hodes. Two local townspeople try to persuade Waldo to stay away from this mysterious woman by explaining that Anna's past five husbands have all died within six months after marrying. They suspect she is a vampire. Even Anna's son is sickly most of the time and very pale looking. It seems every husband she had would begin to look weaker and paler until he expired. Waldo scoffs at their warnings and winds up marrying the beautiful girl anyway, yet he's determined to find out the truth behind the rumors. On their wedding night, Anna waits until she thinks Waldo is sleeping, then begins to move her son's bed over next to his, whispering, "Soon, darling! Soon you'll have what you need!" She then proceeds to roll in a blood transfusion machine, but Waldo, who is wide awake and listening, now suspects it is the son who is the vampire, abruptly confronts her about her actions. Anna, now sobbing and crying, explains that her son has a rare blood disease that requires frequent transfusions. As it turns out, in the shock ending, it is Waldo who is the bloodsucker and, after "revealing his needle-like fangs," he proceeds to tell Anna, "A vampire knows another vampire... why do you think I married you? Because I wanted your blood."

Here again, Crandall pulls out all the stops in revealing his great understanding of how to draw human figures and giving them unusual characteristics, making them more real and appealing to the casual reader. Some of the best rendering on this job is actually the facial expressions of two "old timers" who confront Waldo and try to warn him about Anna. Since a lot of the scenes in the story take place at night,

This page: "From Here to Insanity" is just one of Reed's most "entertaining" stories for EC. *Crime SuspenStories* #18, Aug.–Sept., 1953.
Next page: Page from *Crime SuspenStories* #22, April–May, 1954.

embarrassment to a new level.

Reed's EC contributions were always top-notch and well-executed. Reed wound up producing 18 stories for Gaines' *Crime SuspenStories* and *Shock SuspenStories* from spring of 1953 to late 1954. He also contributed two tales to EC's war title *Two-Fisted Tales*, edited by Harvey Kurtzman. One was titled "Memphis" and appeared in #35, dated October 1953. This seven-page EC classic tells the true saga of a historical battle that occurred on June 6, 1862, between the Union Ironclads and the Confederate gunboats on the Mississippi River. Here Reed depicts the proud citizens of Memphis standing on nearby Chickasaw bluffs, cheering on the six rebel ships as the vessels meet the Union Army head on. The reader sees a sad-looking wife standing on the banks, who knows that her spouse is caught in the middle of this melee and will probably be wounded or die. Her young son is bragging to the other young boys about how his father is among the fighting sailors, as they cheer on the rebel gunboats. The Memphis citizens exalt for their side to "whip them Yanks." One by one, we see the rebel ships unexpectedly rammed by Union steamships with reinforced bows, followed by the Ironclads with cannons agape and roaring. In the final panels, the dying husband is being brought before the distraught wife, who, within minutes, becomes a widow. In the background, the kids continue to play and boastfully shout at an enemy they know nothing about. As the woman weeps over her dead beloved, an old bystander concludes, "Sometime it seems grownups ain't got no more sense 'bout how serious war is than children! No more serious than children ay-tall!"



Another one of Reed's *Two-Fisted Tales* classics is the story titled "Battle," which appeared in #36, dated January 1954. The splash panel alone is enough to draw in any reader who appreciates a grandiose scene. Depicting Tiberius Claudius Caesar riding a horse, as the Roman emperor leads an assortment of elephants, camels, Nubian spearmen, and his soldiers toward a frontal assault on Britain. The story presents excruciating battle scenes on four of its seven pages, as Claudius's army clashes with Britons in a rip-roaring engagement that took place in 55 B.C. With chariots and horses cartwheeling end over end, javelins filling the air, and balls of flaming pitch falling from the heavens, the artist gives readers some of his best panel-to-panel illustrated compositions of war and combat. His usual "R. Crandall" signature is not seen on this story, but instead a new signature, lettered in a "Roman" font, appears in the lower left of the top panel. Perhaps Reed was getting more into signing his art or just experimenting with a signature that related more to the actual story itself.

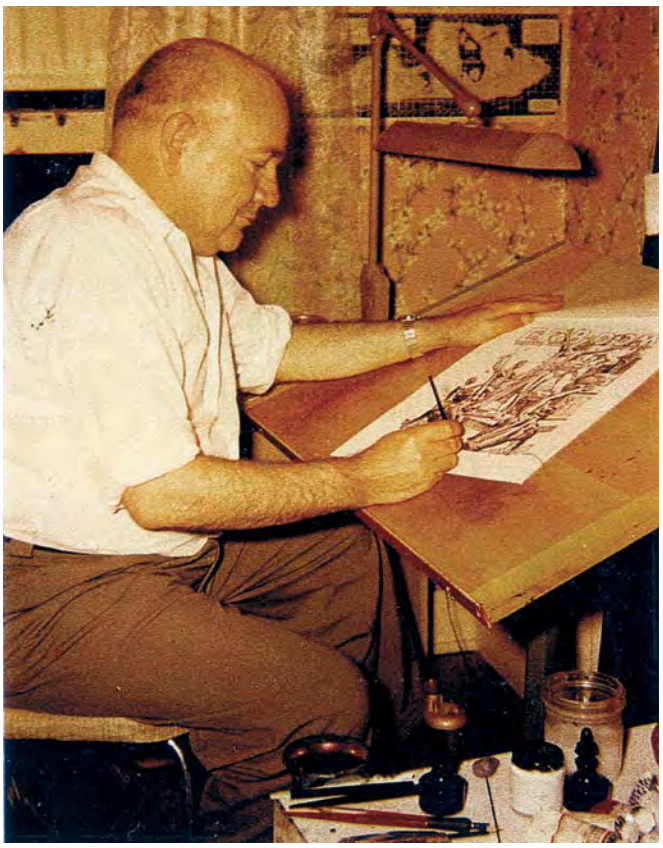
While at the publisher, Reed also got to try his hand at the only three-dimensional story he would ever draw for

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Edgar R. Burroughs Years

Reed Crandall's most significant encounter with the field of illustration art came at an opportune time, during the early 1960s, as one of America's most beloved adventure-fantasy authors was being rediscoverd by a new generation of readers. As with most in his generation, the artist was already familiar regarding the most famous character of Edgar Rice Burroughs [1875-1950], Tarzan of the Apes, having read and enjoyed many of ERB's adventure stories in hardcover editions of the 1920s and 1930s. Over thirty years later, these fantastic worlds created by the author would reconnect with Reed, offering him the opportunity to become reacquainted with the stories and interpret the characters and settings in a visual way as yet unseen by ERB fans. As usual, it would be Al Williamson who was the conduit bringing together the man with fresh challenges.

Burroughs, like so many writers before him, had tried his hand at many different professions (including that of pencil sharpener wholesaler!) when he started reading pulp fiction magazines. After realizing just how badly written many of these stories were, he decided to try his hand at scribing his own. Aiming material at the pulp market, he soon made his first sale, for $400, to the Frank A. Munsey Publishing Company, of New York. This effort, titled "Under the Moons of Mars," ran as a six-part serial in Munsey's *All-Story Weekly* pulp magazine, between February and July of 1912. By the time "Under the Moons of Mars" finished its run, Burroughs had completed and turned over to Munsey's his next opus, "Tarzan of the Apes," which appeared in their October issue as a complete novel. This seminal adventure is about a young boy, born of English parents in the jungles of Africa, who is adopted by a she-ape named Kala after his parents die. Now given the name of Tarzan ("White Skin" in ape language), the lad soon discovers his true origins. Growing up in the jungle, Tarzan becomes a skilled hunter and eventually elicits jealousy from the ape leader who, feeling threatened, attacks the young man. Following a fierce battle, Tarzan kills Kerchak and takes



his place as the new "king" of the apes. This story was so well received by the public that two years later, the A. C. McClurg Company, of Chicago, issued it as a hardcover book, which would sell in the millions. Over ensuing years, Burroughs wrote more than two dozen sequels, continuing the *Tarzan* series into the 1940s, and making the character one of the most popular cultural icons of fiction ever conceived.

"Under the Moons of Mars" also enjoyed a successful publishing history. This story, the first in Burroughs' Barsoom series, surrounds American Civil War veteran John Carter

This page: Reed at his drawing board in his South Sycamore apartment working on an illustration for the Canaveral Press' *The Gods of Mars* (which instead was used as the cover of *ERB-dom* #10, May, 1964). Photo by Robert Barrett. **Next page:** Urged on by good friend Al Williamson, Reed drew this masterful illustration of the Ape Man as a sample to show Canaveral, which used it for the cover of *Tarzan and the Madman*, published in 1965.

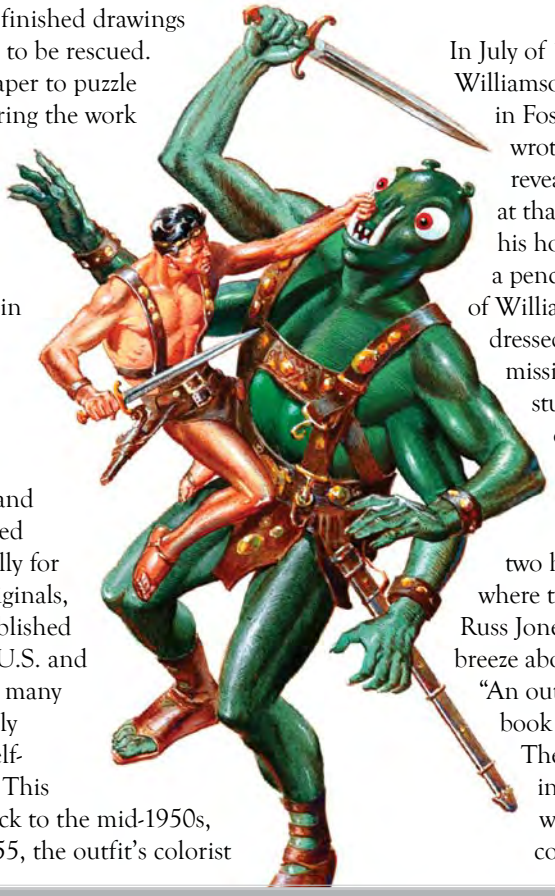
other books would follow. The proposal was rejected by the heirs, but a few copies privately circulated among the ERB collectors community.

Barrett had acquired a copy of Byrne's original manuscript and was having it bound when he asked Reed for a black-&-white painting to serve as the book's frontispiece. Crandall agreed and worked up two sketches, which afforded Barrett a choice before Reed finished the assignment. Both versions depicted an arena setting, one with Tarzan splitting the head of a Banth with a sword, as Deja Thoris looks on, the other scene with Thoris running from a Banth as Tarzan strikes the beast from the side, with green men looking on in the background. After Barrett chose the latter, Reed completed the painting in about a month. When the young man saw the superb final art, he decided to use it as the volume's dust-jacket. This original, measuring 9" x 12", was Reed's first painting to depict ERB characters and it was soon framed to hang in Barrett's home. A few months later, during one of his visits to the apartment, Barrett was gifted with a watercolor drawing of full-figured Carter and Thoris standing together. This illustration was eventually reproduced in black-&-white half-tone printing in the second issue of Wallace Wood's comics prozine, *Witzend* [1967]. By June 1964, Barrett had commissioned Reed to do another painting, this one much larger and in full color. It featured a sequence in *Chessmen of Mars*, depicting Deja Thoris being rescued by the Earthman warrior and surrounded by multi-limbed

adversaries, one that always had been a favorite of Barrett since first reading the novel many years earlier. After completing several small sketches and one large final preliminary, Reed prepared a smaller finished painting in oils. He gave this to Bob as a gift, explaining that it might take some time to do the final large one as he could only work on it as allowed by his regular *Treasure Chest* assignments.

Almost to a fault, Reed was always generous to his fans and others who appreciated his art and, during his lifetime, he simply gave away many sketches and drawings. The physical possession of original art never meant much to Reed, who would just as soon give it away to his admirers rather than see it sitting around collecting dust and taking up space. It was not uncommon for Barrett and other visitors to note preliminary sketches and even tight, finished drawings thrown into Reed's trashcan begging to be rescued. The artist always used thin vellum paper to puzzle out ideas and layouts before transferring the work to the illustration board where tackling the final drawing. A number of these velum originals were saved because, when asked, Reed allowed visiting art lovers to retrieve the discards out of the dustbin and, as a result, they are coveted in collections to this day.

From about 1965 until 1973, as more fans and collectors discovered his Wichita address to visit or write and request original drawings, Reed turned out a variety of specialty pieces, usually for little or no money. Some of these originals, scattered far and wide, remain unpublished and buried in collections across the U.S. and overseas. Of those who visited Reed, many soon realized that the artist was totally without ego and had a remarkably self-deprecating attitude about his work. This attitude was aptly expressed as far back to the mid-1950s, when the artist worked at EC. In 1955, the outfit's colorist (and superb cartoonist in her own right), Marie Severin, drew caricatures of EC's freelancers to decorate the office walls during Gaines' Christmas parties. The renowned bullpen was depicted with a full-figure photo of Hollywood bombshell Marilyn Monroe pasted in beside the artist. The theme behind these humorous images was, "What our boys would do if they were alone with Marilyn Monroe." Severin's cartoon showed Reed as a very shy artist, with art portfolio in hand, delivering a job to the office. Reed's head is tilted downwards, tears flowing down his cheeks, as he pitifully exclaims "Do you really think so? I thought I did a terrible job!!" This attitude was what Reed projected about his abilities when delivering finished art to EC. He simply never thought he was good enough and it did not go unnoticed.



In July of 1964, Reed went to visit with Al Williamson and his wife, Arlene, at their home in Fosterdale, New York. While there, he wrote a two-page letter to Barrett and it revealed much of what was happening at that time in the life of both Reed and his host. Atop the first page, Reed drew a penciled humorous-looking caricature of Williamson sitting at his drawing board, dressed as John Carter of Mars. In the missive, Reed mentions, "Al has a nice studio here and we have been knocking out a lot of work together! As a matter of fact, we have been so busy I haven't had a chance to write you until now." Reed explained that the two had made a trip into New York City, where they visited several friends, including Russ Jones and Wallace Wood, and "shot the breeze about the bad old days." He further adds, "An outfit in N.Y. is starting a new comic book and I have one of the scripts already." The outfit to which Reed referred was industry upstart Warren Publishing, which was about to launch a new horror comic book in magazine format. The

This page: Photo and art collages of all the EC artists, writers, and editors were displayed at the 1955 EC Christmas party. This, at top inset, shows Reed's self-deprecating attitude about his abilities. Above is a painting gifted to Robert Barrett in 1964. **Next page:** At top is Edgar Rice Burroughs and his most famous creations drawn by Reed as frontispiece for Dick Lupoff's biography of the adventurer writer, *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*, published by Canaveral Press (1965). Bottom inset is a specialty drawing of Buster Crabbe as Flash Gordon with love interest Dale Arden, based on the 1940 movie serial. The original art was given to Reed's close friend Al Williamson in 1964.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Comics Bounce Back

Reed Crandall suddenly had a lot of work before him as he started on the *Creepy* script he had picked up from editor Russ Jones during a trip to New York City. The new black-&-white horror comics magazine turned out to be singular in the field as, akin to the Picto-Fiction magazines published by EC in the mid-1950s, the comics publication did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Comics Code Association of America, which was going strong and still holding sway over the content of mainstream comics. With few restrictions, *Creepy* was intent on presenting stories geared to a more adult audience. The publisher of this new periodical was James Warren, an entrepreneur who had started in the business during the late 1950s with his men's magazine, *After Hours*, tailored after Hugh Hefner's *Playboy*, which lasted a mere four issues. Shortly after that endeavor, he set the publishing world on fire with his successful *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman, a magazine catering to adolescents devoted to fantasy, horror, and science fiction movies of the past and present.

During the mid-1960s, EC Comics fandom was experiencing burgeoning growth as enthusiastic aficionados had discovered the old four-color comic books through used bookstores or dealers through the mail. This second generation of "fan-addicts" eventually resulted in a wave of handsomely-produced fanzines, such as *Spa Fon* and *Squa Tront*, and, in 1972, led to a New York City convention devoted to the legendary outfit and its talented stable of freelancers. Most of the EC artists attended that gathering, except for Johnny Craig, John Severin, Graham Ingels, and Reed Crandall. During that time, filmmakers took an interest in EC's old horror line and two major motion pictures were produced, *Tales from the Crypt* and *Vault of Horror*, replete with segments adapting some of the company's best tales of terror.

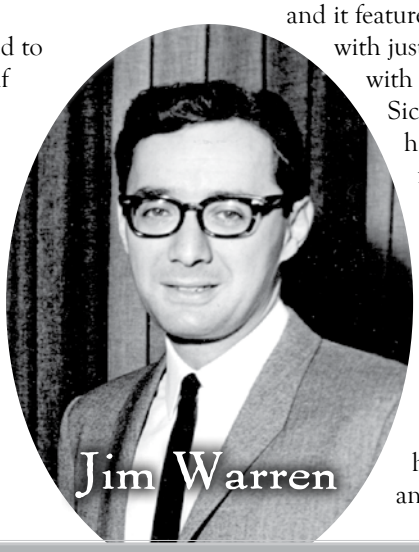
Visionary publisher James Warren surmised that his young *Famous Monsters* readership might respond eagerly to gripping yarns of monsters and the macabre, and thus embarked on a revival (of a sort) of the EC ethos: unrestrained storytelling using the best writers and artists in the industry. As Warren had been a fan of the comics helmed by Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein, he gathered many of the original artists back together to work on the new title, *Creepy*, and offered them $35 a page. This veritable EC reunion boasted stalwarts including Johnny Craig, Reed Crandall, Jack Davis, George Evans, Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel, Gray Morrow, Joe Orlando, Angelo Torres, Alex Toth, Al Williamson, and Wallace Wood.

At the outset, the new magazine featured only black-&-white or gray-tone interior artwork. This monotone approach appealed to many artists so accustomed to seeing their work poorly reproduced in color comic books, and Warren's paper stock and reproduction methods were also better than regular comics in those days. Without color to darken or muddy-up their work, many artists employed more detail and depth, and,

This page: *Creepy* magazine reunited most of the original artists who had drawn horror stories during the 1950s for EC Comics. EC stalwart Jack Davis created the cover of this first issue, released in November of 1964. **Next page:** Reed's old EC buddy Wallace Wood enlisted Reed for his new *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* title, to provide Dynamo and Noman stories. This cover, from #4, April, 1966, was penciled by Reed and inked by Wood.

at the same time as the launch of *Creepy*, the young publisher was looking at other ideas. Being an ardent Sherlock Holmes fan, he negotiated with the Arthur Conan Doyle estate to adapt the detective's exploits into the black-&-white magazine format. Warren recognized that Reed had the perfect style for such a project and was a natural lead-in artist but, unfortunately, the estate was not interested.

Like the old EC comics, Warren decided to include a host in his new horror magazine, if only to add a bit of humor and introduce readers to each story. Based on input from Russ Jones and Jim Warren, Jack Davis, who had drawn tales narrated by the Crypt Keeper for Gaines' line, was called on to work up character portraits of Uncle Creepy. Though the artist, perhaps because he was quickly becoming one of America's more respected commercial cartoonists, was reluctant to get involved with horror comics again on a large scale, at the tenacious urging of James T. Warren, Davis drew the first issue's cover, which depicted Uncle Creepy reading his magazine, surrounded by an assortment of monsters and creatures.



Reed dove into his initial *Creepy* assignment with a sense of renewed energy and an inspiration to produce horrific images not witnessed since his EC heyday. His six-page story, "Vampires Fly At Dusk," was written by Archie Goodwin and it features a classic tale of vampires intermingled with just a touch of romance. Rendered mostly with a fine line pen tip, the narrative is set in Sicily and it tells of Count Carlo Orsini and his beautiful new wife, who have recently moved into an old castle. Since their arrival, several villagers are murdered, leading the local police inspector to suspect the count. Similar to the twist-ending stories EC was renown, the story misdirects the reader into thinking that the noble is the offender when, in fact, his spouse, albeit unaware of her own bloodsucking identity, is the killer. After discovering her husband has a hidden passageway entering the castle and a library filled with books on vampires,

This page: "Vampires Fly at Dusk" was Reed's first contribution to the new *Creepy* and his "Curse of the Full Moon" was published in #4, June, 1965. Both, seen at top, are representative of some of his best work for Warren Publications. Inset above is James Warren, publisher of *Creepy*.
Next page: A true Crandall masterpiece for Warren was an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" (Creepy #6, Fall, 1965).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Spotlight Dims

In 1968, Reed turned out one more job for Wallace Wood at Tower Publishing, a 10-page Dynamo story, "The Arena," which appeared in *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #18, dated September of that year. Once again, Wood used a splash page from Reed's submission as the cover. When the last issue (#20) came out in November of 1969, it was all-reprint, containing previously released stories, which included one of Reed's earlier efforts. Shortly after this time, Tower threw in the towel on publishing comic books and chose to focus on their paperback line. Reed also produced four stories for *Treasure Chest* in 1968 and, toward the end of the year, the artist started receiving new *Creepy* and *Eerie* scripts from Jim Warren's new editor, Bill Parente. For awhile, Parente let Reed do the entire job, including lettering the story. Reed never believed he was much good at lettering, and while it was passable, the style itself never quite matched the standard lettering in the magazine. Unlike earlier tales that incorporated pasted-on Photostatic head-portraits of the horror hosts on the first and last page, for a short time Reed had permission to draw his own versions of the ghoulish mascots. He provided only three stories for the b-&-w horror comic line that year, though 10 of his older stories were reprinted in various Warren titles and annuals, the publisher was still trying to dig out from under financial difficulties that had begun in 1967. Beginning to feel the pinch all around and with no new job opportunities on the horizon, it was not a pleasant time for the artist. His longtime outlets for sustai work were drying up all around.

Even his usually reliable *Treasure Chest* assignments w dropping off considerably from what they used to be and, during the year of 1969, he turned out only two stories fo

This page: At top is a photo of Reed posing for a character in Al V Above inset is the cover *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #18, which craftily #74 (October, 1975) was an all-Crandall issue, reprinting nine of his cover (vignettes of his '60s horror work), it assuredly served as tes